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2001HANOI03302 - UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	EB-00	ED-01	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00	HHS-01
	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	JUSE-00	L-00	VCE-00
	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00
	PC-01	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	STR-00
	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-02
	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/011W			

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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5064
INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
SECDEF WASHDC
USDA WASHDC
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV
SECDEF FOR ABLAGG
STATE PASS USAID ANE/ AFERRARA

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [VM](#) [ETMIN](#)
SUBJECT: THE ROLE OF BOARDING SCHOOLS IN MINORITY INTEGRATION

1. SUMMARY: BOARDING SCHOOL EDUCATION PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE EFFORTS OF PHU THO AND TUYEN QUANG PROVINCES IN NORTHERN VIETNAM TO INTEGRATE THEIR ETHNIC MINORITY POPULATIONS. THE GVN SET UP BOARDING SCHOOLS NOT ONLY FOR INTEGRATION, BUT ALSO BECAUSE THEY ARE MUCH CHEAPER TO BUILD AND STAFF THAN THE ALTERNATIVE OF SETTING UP LOCAL SCHOOLS IN REMOTE VILLAGES. THE BOARDING SCHOOLS BRING SELECTED ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS TO MORE CENTRAL, BUT STILL SOMEWHAT ISOLATED LOCATIONS OUTSIDE OF THEIR COMMUNITIES. THERE, IN THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE, STUDENTS RECEIVE A RELATIVELY GOOD EDUCATION AND EXPOSURE TO A DAILY PROGRAM THAT IS CONSIDERABLY MORE INTENSIVE AND STRUCTURED THAN IS TYPICAL FOR VIETNAMESE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. GRADUATES OF THE SCHOOLS HAVE BECOME, AMONG OTHER THINGS, GOVERNMENT LEADERS, PHYSICIANS, AND TEACHERS. END SUMMARY.

WHY BOARDING SCHOOLS?

2. DURING AN OFFICIAL TRIP TO THE NORTHERN PROVINCES OF PHU THO AND TUYEN QUANG PROVINCES NOVEMBER 27-29, POLOFF AND POL PSN VISITED TWO BOARDING HIGH SCHOOLS FOR ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS. PROVINCES WITH SIGNIFICANT MINORITY POPULATIONS THROUGHOUT VIETNAM HAVE ESTABLISHED SECONDARY LEVEL BOARDING SCHOOLS FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES. VARIOUS OFFICIALS STRESSED THAT MANY OF THE STUDENTS ATTENDING THE BOARDING SCHOOLS ARE

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FROM VILLAGES THAT CAN ONLY BE REACHED ON FOOT AND THAT OFTEN DO NOT HAVE LOCAL SCHOOLS OR BASIC UTILITIES. PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS ALSO DISCUSSED THE DIFFICULTY OF GETTING TEACHERS TO WORK IN REMOTE SCHOOLS. FEW ETHNIC MAJORITY KINH TEACHERS ARE WILLING TO WORK IN THE MOUNTAINS AND THE NUMBER OF TEACHERS FROM ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS IS VERY SMALL, THEY ADDED.

WHY GO TO A BOARDING SCHOOL?

3. SCHOOL AND PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS FREQUENTLY REFERRED TO THE GREAT COMPETITION TO ATTEND THESE BOARDING SCHOOLS. THEY EXPLAINED THAT THE BOARDING SCHOOLS OFFER SEVERAL ADVANTAGES. FOREMOST, THEY SAID, IS THAT THE BOARDING SCHOOLS MAY BE THE ONLY OPPORTUNITY THESE STUDENTS HAVE TO ATTEND HIGH SCHOOL AT ALL. MOREOVER, SCHOOL OFFICIALS CLAIMED THAT THE BOARDING SCHOOLS PROVIDE A BETTER EDUCATION

THAN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DISTRICT TOWNS, THE OTHER
OPTION FOR SOME OF THESE STUDENTS. PROVINCIAL AND SCHOOL
OFFICIALS ALSO EXPLAINED THAT ALLOWANCES PAID OUT OF THE
NATIONAL BUDGET PAY FOR TEXTBOOKS, SCHOOL SUPPLIES, BEDDING,
MOSQUITO NETS, AND CLOTHING. FURTHERMORE, THE SCHOOLS
RECEIVE AN ALLOWANCE OF VIETNAM DONG 120,000 PER STUDENT PER
MONTH, PRIMARILY FOR FOOD. THE STUDENTS, SCHOOL OFFICIALS
SAID, MAY USE ANY LEFTOVER AMOUNT FOR DISCRETIONARY
SPENDING. FINALLY, OFFICIALS ADDED, ALL STUDENTS RECEIVE AN
ALLOTMENT TO COVER THE COST OF TRAVELING TO AND FROM THEIR
HOME COMMUNITIES TWICE A YEAR. OFFICIALS NOTED THAT, SINCE
MANY OF THESE STUDENTS ARE FROM VERY POOR FAMILIES, THERE
WAS NO WAY FOR THEM TO ATTEND SCHOOL WITHOUT THESE
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SUBSIDIES.

HOW DO YOU GET IN?

14. SCHOOL OFFICIALS EXPLAINED HOW STUDENTS WERE CHOSEN TO
ATTEND THE BOARDING SCHOOLS. THE PHU THO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
HEADMASTER SAID THAT HIS STUDENTS WERE ALL GRADUATES OF THE
PROVINCE'S BASIC SECONDARY LEVEL (JUNIOR HIGH) BOARDING
SCHOOL WHO HAD PASSED AN ENTRANCE EXAMINATION. HE ADDED
THAT COMMUNE-LEVEL OFFICIALS CHOSE BASIC SECONDARY BOARDING
SCHOOL STUDENTS BASED ON THEIR "POTENTIAL." TUYEN QUANG
OFFICIALS SAID THAT ALL OF THEIR STUDENTS WERE CHOSEN BY
EXAMINATION; 70 PERCENT OF THE INCOMING STUDENTS ARE FROM
THE PROVINCE'S THREE BASIC SECONDARY BOARDING SCHOOLS AND 30
PERCENT FROM THE REST OF THE PROVINCE'S BASIC SECONDARY
SCHOOLS. PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS REMARKED THAT COMPETITION TO
GET INTO THE SCHOOLS IS VERY KEEN.

EDUCATION IN THE BOARDING SCHOOLS

15. OFFICIALS SAID THE BOARDING SCHOOLS USE THE STANDARD
NATIONAL CURRICULUM AS WELL AS A PROGRAM OF EXTRACURRICULAR
ACTIVITIES DEFINED BY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. TEACHERS,
ACCORDING TO HEADMASTERS, SUPERVISE STUDY AND
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES WITH A DAILY SCHEDULE OF ACADEMIC
CLASSES IN THE MORNING AND SUPERVISED STUDY, PRACTICUMS,
SPORTS, AND CIVICS AND SOCIALIZATION ACTIVITIES IN THE
AFTERNOONS AND EVENINGS. OFFICIALS AT BOTH SCHOOLS ADMITTED
THAT THEY DO NOT ADD OR CHANGE ANY ACTIVITIES BASED ON LOCAL
CONDITIONS, NOR DID THEY EMPHASIZE THE STUDENTS' VARIOUS
CULTURAL HERITAGES. THEY HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF
STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN SOCIALIZATION AND CIVICS
ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO "INTEGRATE THEM INTO THE NATION." IN
RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S RECENT
DIRECTIVE TO USE LOCAL LANGUAGES IN SCHOOLS, TUYEN QUANG'S
PROVINCIAL EDUCATION CHIEF SAID THAT VIETNAMESE HAD BEEN THE
SOLE MEANS OF INSTRUCTION IN ALL OF THE PROVINCE'S SCHOOLS
SINCE THE 1970'S AND THAT THERE WERE NO PLANS TO USE
MINORITY LANGUAGES AGAIN.

THE RESULTS

16. SCHOOL OFFICIALS SAID THAT THEIR PRIMARY GOAL IS TO
GRADUATE STUDENTS WHO CAN HELP THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND THAT
THEIR YARDSTICK IS THE NUMBER WHO GET INTO COLLEGE. THE
HEADMASTER CLAIMED THAT ALMOST HALF OF TUYEN QUANG'S
GRADUATES HAD GONE ON FOR FURTHER TRAINING AFTER THE SPRING
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2001 GRADUATION, WHEREAS HIS OPPOSITE NUMBER IN PHU THO
CLAIMED THAT ABOUT ONLY 15 PERCENT OF HIS HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATES CONTINUED THEIR EDUCATION. WHILE THE PHU THO
BOARDING HIGH SCHOOL HAD ONLY OPENED IN 1997, THE TUYEN
QUANG OFFICIALS NOTED THAT THEIR SCHOOL HAD BEEN OPEN SINCE
1959 AND THAT ITS CUMULATIVE TOTAL OF 4,465 GRADUATES NOW
INCLUDED ALMOST 50 MEDICAL DOCTORS AND DOCTORATE DEGREE
HOLDERS, SEVERAL PROVINCIAL PEOPLE COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN AND
VICE-CHAIRMEN, HEADS OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES,
AND MANY OF THE SCHOOLS' CURRENT TEACHERS. (NOTE: ETHNIC
MINORITIES MAKE UP ABOUT HALF OF TUYEN QUANG'S POPULATION
AND THE PROVINCIAL PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND VICE-
CHAIRMAN, THE PROVINCIAL EDUCATION CHIEF, AND A NUMBER OF
OTHER PROVINCIAL LEADERS ARE MEMBERS OF MINORITY GROUPS.
MINORITIES COMPRISE ABOUT 2.5 PERCENT OF PHU THO'S
POPULATION. END NOTE.) OFFICIALS SAID THAT GRADUATES WHO
DID NOT GO ON TO COLLEGE GENERALLY RETURNED TO AND WORKED IN
THEIR OWN COMMUNITIES.

LIFE AT THE SCHOOLS

17. STUDENTS STAY AT THE SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE ACADEMIC
YEAR, ACCORDING TO SCHOOL OFFICIALS. MOST ONLY RETURN HOME
DURING SUMMER VACATION AND AT TET, BECAUSE, THE HEADMASTERS
SAID, IT IS TOO TIME CONSUMING AND TOO EXPENSIVE TO GO HOME
MORE FREQUENTLY. LIKEWISE, PARENTS VERY SELDOM VISIT. THE

TEACHERS LIVE IN THE COMMUNITY AROUND THE SCHOOLS AND
RECEIVE 30 PERCENT INCENTIVE PAY FOR TEACHING AT A BOARDING
SCHOOL, ACCORDING TO THE TUYEN QUANG SCHOOL HEADMASTER;
OTHER STAFF MEMBERS LIVE IN THE SCHOOLS WITH THE STUDENTS.

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THE TUYEN QUANG HEADMASTER REMARKED THAT TEACHERS BECOME
SURROGATE PARENTS FOR THE STUDENTS. SCHOOL AND PROVINCIAL
OFFICIALS EMPHASIZED THAT STUDENTS PRODUCE MUCH OF THEIR OWN
FOOD, BOTH TO MAKE THEIR MONTHLY ALLOWANCES GO FARTHER AND
TO PUT THEIR AGRICULTURE CLASSES INTO PRACTICE.

18. BOTH SCHOOLS ARE LOCATED 7 TO 10 KILOMETERS FROM THE
NEAREST DISTRICT TOWN ON SELF-CONTAINED CAMPUSES. SCHOOL
OFFICIALS SAID THAT STUDENTS ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO LEAVE
CAMPUS. PHU THO OFFICIALS SAID THEIR FACILITY USED TO BE A
COLLEGE FOR STUDENTS FROM LAOS. AT BOTH SCHOOLS, EIGHT TO
TEN STUDENTS SHARED ONE DORMITORY ROOM, DOUBLING UP ON BUNK
BEDS. THE EACH STUDENT HAD WOODEN LOCKER AND SOME ROOMS
WERE DECORATED WITH POSTERS. ON THE DAY OF POLOFF'S VISIT,
MOST STUDENTS IN THE TUYEN QUANG BOARDING SCHOOL APPEARED TO
BE DRESSED IN TRADITIONAL CLOTHING OF THEIR VARIOUS ETHNIC
GROUPS. THEY ALSO CARRIED LENGTHS OF BAMBOO, DESCRIBED BY
ONE OFFICIAL AS "RIFLES" SINCE THE STUDENTS WERE IN MILITARY
TRAINING THAT WEEK. STUDENTS AT THE PHU THO BOARDING SCHOOL
WERE CASUALLY DRESSED DURING THE LATE AFTERNOON HOUR OF
POLOFF'S VISIT.

19. COMMENT: THE BOARDING SCHOOLS REPRESENT A GOOD
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MINORITY STUDENTS AND PROVIDE
THE GVN A MEANS TO BOND THEM MORE CLOSELY TO THE CENTER.
THE GVN PAYS FOR NEARLY ALL OF THEIR EXPENSES AND ITS
EMPLOYEES BECOME THEIR SURROGATE PARENTS. IF THE INTENTION
IS TO PRODUCE LOYAL AND INVOLVED CITIZENS, THEN THE APPARENT
HEAVY REPRESENTATION OF BOARDING SCHOOL ALUMNI IN THE RANKS
OF TUYEN QUANG'S PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP SUGGESTS SUCCESS. IT
IS LESS CLEAR, HOWEVER, WHAT CONTRIBUTION THESE SCHOOLS MAKE
IN PROMOTING OR MAINTAINING TRADITIONAL MINORITY CULTURES,
OR IN ENSURING THAT THE INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION PAYS OFF FOR
THEIR OWN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES.
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